

## ***What is the River Watch Program?***

It is a voluntary program in which we are asking pilots and town/city residents to report observations of river ice conditions. Pilots are asked for reports on what they see along their normal route of flight and at their standard flight level.

## ***What is an example of a river condition that you would like to have reported?***

We are focusing on reports of river ice during the breakup process, but would welcome ice or flood reports during other seasons as well.

## ***Who are the pilots that help out?***

We had a great response from the air taxi operators in Alaska. These pilots are flying between rural communities on a daily basis, and are in a great position to notice change on the river. We have gotten reports from State and Federal agency pilots during their normal course of operations. We also have a small group of general aviation pilots who have been interested enough to volunteer to fly out to check on specific areas where we need some information about conditions.

## ***How would a pilot submit a report?***

The primary format for submitting a report is as a remark on a standard pilot report or PIREP. Most of the time, these are passed by the pilot to the Flight Service Stations or directly to the CWSUs over the radio. Reports can also be emailed to the National Weather Service in text or digital photo formats. Telephone reports can also be given.

## ***Are the Flight Service Stations aware of this program?***

The Flight Service Stations are quite supportive of this program. The NWS has given training presentations to FSS staff to assist the implementation.

## ***How would a town/city resident submit a report?***

Reports can be emailed to the National Weather Service in text or digital photo formats. Telephone reports can also be given.

## ***What kind of training is needed for submitting a report?***

It helps if observers understand a little bit about the process of river ice break-up and river stages in general. In our training we explain the mechanics of ice break-up and provide common terminology for key stages of the ice breakup process. We have a good collection of photographs which illustrate these stages. Observers can attend a training session or go through the presentation on the program web site. We have also developed a checklist of terms and an observer guide book.

## ***How will the information be used?***

The National Weather Service is responsible for monitoring the ice breakup process to identify the potential for flooding due to ice jams or other causes like heavy rain. Some rivers are also heavily used for transportation and knowledge of the status of the breakup process is useful for knowing when it is safe to use boats. Reports from observers can significantly increase the information available for these purposes.

## ***How do the observers get feedback on the use of their reports?***

The observer reports appear on the NWS site as a Local Storm Report, or LSR along with reports from other sources.

### ***When does the ice break up?***

Most of the breakup activity occurs during March, but timing can vary from year to year.